

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11 AID-05 /069 W
-----063761 030432Z /11

R 022035Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8395

INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 QUITO 3711

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, EC

SUBJECT: THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE: AT THE QUARTER POLE

REF: QUITO A-26

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: AS THE FINAL MONTH OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN APPROACHES, THERE IS A DEVELOPING CONSENSUS ABOUT THE LIKELY RESULT OF THE JULY 16 ELECTIONS. SIXTO DURAN-BALLEN CONTINUES TO LEAD THE PACK AND WILL LIKELY FINISH IN FIRST PLACE, THOUGH NOT WITH THE SIMPLE MAJORITY THAT WOULD GIVE HIM VICTORY IN THE FIRST ROUND. THREE CANDIDATES, THE LIBERALS' HUERTA, THE ID'S BORJA AND THE CFP'S ROLDOS, THOUGH PLAGUED WITH ASSORTED PROBLEMS, HAVE THE POSSIBILITY OF RUNNING SECOND IN JULY AND THUS FACING DURAN-BALLEN IN THE SUBSEQUENT RUNOFF. NO ONE GIVES FADI (COMMUNIST) CANDIDATE RENE MAUGE OR FRA CANDIDATE ABDON CALDERON POSSIBILITIES OF ELCTION. END SUMMARY.

2. OF THE SIX OFFICIAL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES, ONLY THE COMMUNIST RENE MAUGE AND THE ECCENTRIC ABDON CALDERON CAN BE DISCOUNTED AS SERIOUS CONTENDERS. OBSERVERS ARE
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DIVIDED CONCERNING THE CHANCES OF THE REMAINING FOUR SIXTO DURAN-BALLEN, RAUL CLEMENTE HUERTA, JAIME ROLDOS, AND RODRIGO BORJA. GIVEN THE LONG RECESS FROM ELECTORAL POLITICS, PLUS SUCH FACTORS AS SIGNIFICANT DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES SINCE 1968, THE NEW PETROLEUM PROSPERITY, THE INTRODUCTION OF THE POSSIBILITY OF A SECOND ROUND OF VOTING, AND THE ABSENCE AMONG THE CANDIDATES OF THE

DEMAGOGIC CHARLATANS WHO HAVE DOMINATED THE PROCESS IN THE PAST, MOST PROFESSIONAL POLITICIANS ARE LOATH TO MAKE PREDICTIONS AT THIS STAGE. THEY SEE IT AS A HORSE RACE.

3. DESPITE THIS UNCERTAINTY, THERE IS A ROUGH CONSENSUS ABOUT THE SHAPE OF THE RACE AT THIS POINT. NEARLY ALL AGREE THAT DURAN-BALLEN WILL BE THE WINNER ON THE FIRST ROUND OWING TO HIS STRONG CONSERVATIVE BASE IN THE SIERRA AND HIS SURPRISING APPEAL IN THE COASTAL PROVINCES. AT THE MOMENT, THERE IS A BATTLE FOR THE SECOND SPOT AND A LIKELY RUN-OFF POSITION AGAINST DURAN-BALLEN IN THE SECOND ROUND OF VOTING. HUERTA, ROLDOS, AND BORJA ARE ALL CONCEDED TO HAVE A CHANCE WITH THE PERCEPTION THAT HUERTA MAY PROVE TO BE STRONGEST OF THE THREE.

4. THE FNC'S DURAN-BALLEN APPEARS TO HAVE OVERCOME MUCH OF HIS EARLIER AMATEURISM AND HIS CAMPAIGN APPEARS TO BE RUNNING MUCH MORE SMOOTHLY. IN PART THIS DERIVES FROM THE EXPERTISE OF THE VELASQUISTAS AND CONSERVATIVES WITH WHOM HE IS ALLIED. HOWEVER, DURAN-BALLEN'S CROWDS, EVEN IN NON-VELASQUISTA TERRITORY, HAVE BEEN IMPRESSIVE. HIS TELEVISION APPEARANCES HAVE SMOOTHED OUT AND HE HAS AVOIDED THE STAND-UP SPEECHES IN WHICH HE PERFORMS SO POORLY. IN THE DEBATES AND THE ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS IN WHICH HE HAS PARTICIPATED LATELY, HE HAS BEEN AT EASE
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AND IMPRESSIVE. AFTER A VERY POOR START, THEN, WE SEE HIM REMAINING AS THE PRESENT FRONT RUNNER WHOSE CAMPAIGN IS PICKING UP SPEED. DURAN HAS TAKEN TO CAMPAIGNING ALMOST EVERY DAY NOW, CONTRASTING WITH THE OTHER CANDIDATES WHO ARE WORKING JUST THREE OR FOUR DAYS A WEEK.

5. AFTER GETTING A LATE START, HUERTA ALSO SEEMS TO BE MAKING UP GROUND, BUT NOT AT A PACE THAT WILL ALLOW HIM TO CATCH DURAN-BALLEN. HUERTA SEEMS TO HAVE SURPASSED DURAN-BALLEN IN ACCESS TO FUNDING AND IS USING GREAT AMOUNTS OF TELEVISION TIME AND PAID NEWS-PAPER SPACE. HIS FIRST OUTING ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL, TO EL ORO LAST WEEK, WAS HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL IN TERMS OF THE CROWDS DRAWN, BUT REPORTEDLY COST THE CAMPAIGN US \$120,000, A PRINCELY SUM FOR ECUADOR. HUERTA, THOUGH, SUFFERS FROM PRESENT AND POTENTIAL PROBLEMS. HIS LIBERAL PARTY REMAINS DIVIDED; THE NOW DISQUALIFIED FORMER LIBERAL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, FRANCISCO (PANCHO) HUERTA MONTALVO, CONTROLS THE GUAYAQUIL BRANCH OF THE PARTY AND IS FIGHTING TO FILE LIBERAL CANDIDATES FOR MAYOR AND COUNCILMEN. THIS OCCURRED AFTER RAUL CLEMENTE AND THE NATIONAL LIBERAL DIRECTORATE HAD AGREED TO ENDORSE

CARLOS JULIO AROSEMENA'S MAYOR CANDIDATE IN EXCHANGE FOR AROSEMENA'S SUPPORT FOR RAUL CLEMENTE'S NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC UNITY FRONT CANDIDACY. THE NATIONAL DIRECTORATE HAS NOW BEGUN STEPS TO EXPEL SOME GUAYAS PARTY MEMBERS, A MOVE THAT WILL SERVE TO FURTHER DIVIDE THE PARTY.

6. HUERTA, IN RUNNING AS THE CANDIDATE OF THE MULTI-PARTY FUDN, IS IMITATING THE EXAMPLE OF SIXTO DURAN-BALLEN'S FNC. HOWEVER, MOST FUDN ORGANIZATIONS, IN CONTRAST TO THE FNC, ARE MERE NAMES RATHER THAN PARTIES WITH VOTE-WINNING POWER. HUERTA MUST DEPEND ON THE LIBERALS TO BE ELECTED AND ANY DIVISION IN THE PARTY THREATENS HIS CHANCES.

7. HUERTA ALSO SUFFERS FROM AN IMPRESSION IN SOME
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QUARTERS THAT HE HAS MADE A DEAL WITH THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT. THIS DERIVES FROM THE NOW WIDELY DISCUSSED MEETINGS HE HAD WITH GOE OFFICIALS PRIOR TO HIS NEPHEW'S DISQUALIFICATION. ANOTHER TIME BOMB IS THE REPORTED CONVICTION OF RUNNING MATE ARSENIO VIVANCO ON A CHARGE OF FALSIFICATION OF IMPORT DOCUMENTS.

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11 AID-05 /069 W
-----087021 062035Z /61/15

R 022035Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8396
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 QUITO 3711

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y FOR PARA TEN AND ELEVEN

8. ONE OF THE INTERESTING PHENOMENA OF THIS CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN THE FAILURE OF THE CFP'S ROLDOS' CAMPAIGN TO TAKE OFF AFTER WHAT SEEMED TO BE A PROMISING START. ALTHOUGH MOST POLITICIANS BELIEVE THAT ROLDOS IS OUT IN FRONT IN BUCARAM'S BASTION OF GUAYAQUIL, ONE OF THE MORE SERIOUS POLLS SHOWS ROLDOS RUNNING A SHOCKINGLY POOR THIRD THERE BEHIND DURAN-BALLEN AND HUERTA. ROLDOS HAS SHOWN EMBARRASSING WEAKNESS IN QUITO, WHERE A RECENT RALLY FIZZLED. ALSO, DESPITE DRAWING LARGE CROWDS THERE PREVIOUSLY, THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT ROLDOS IS RUNNING POORLY IN POPULOUS MANABI, WHERE THE CFP HAD HAD A GOOD ORGANIZATION. THINGS ARE LOOKING SO GRIM THAT, HAVING FAILED TO GET THE FAMILY NAME ON THE BALLOT WHEN HIS WIFE DID NOT QUALIFY AS MAYOR, BUCARAM INSCRIBED HIMSELF AS THE CFP CANDIDATE AS VICE MAYOR OF GUAYAQUIL, AN OFFICE TO WHICH HE WOULD REALLY NOT ASPIRE. THIS IS PERCEIVED AS AN EFFORT TO PRODUCE A COATTAIL EFFECT FOR ROLDOS IN GUAYAQUIL AS WELL AS AN ATTEMPT TO RETAIN CONTROL OF HIS POWER BASE. IN SPITE OF PRESENT DIFFICULTIES THERE IS A STRONG FEELING THAT BUCARAM'S MORE FERVENT

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ACTIVITY IN GUAYAQUIL AND THE CFP ORGANIZATION WILL MAKE ROLDOS A MORE FORMIDABLE CANDIDATE THAN HE SEEMS NOW.

9. RODRIGO BORJA HAS PERHAPS THE MOST ENIGMATIC CANDIDACY. THE SAME POLL THAT SHOWS ROLDOS TRAILING IN GUAYAQUIL HAS BORJA WITH A COMFORTABLE SIX POINT LEAD OVER DURAN-BALLEN IN QUITO, HOME OF BOTH. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT BORJA IS POPULAR WITH THE WHITE-COLLAR CLAS AND WITH YOUTH. BUT SURPRISINGLY, HE IS ALSO DEMONSTRATING MORE STRENGTH THAN ANY OTHER CANDIDATE AMONG QUITO'S LOWER CLASSES. AGAIN SURPRISINGLY, BORJA, WHO HAS BEEN CAMPAIGNING ALL OVER THE COUNTRY TWICE AS LONG AS ANY OTHER CANDIDATE, APPARENTLY HAS FAILED TO MAKE ANY IMPRESSION IN GUAYAQUIL WHERE HE IS PERCEIVED BY BOTH POLS AND POLLS TO BE TRAILING ALL BUT MAUGE. ON THE OTHER HAND, BORJA MAY BE INHERITING SOME OF PANCHITO HUERTA'S SUPPORT AS EVIDENCED BY UNEXPECTEDLY GOOD CROWDS IN CUENCA, A PANCHISTA LIBERAL STRONGHOLD, AND REPORTS OF CONTACTS WITH SOME OF PANCHITO'S ERSTWHILE CADRES. IF BORJA HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO DRUM UP RESPECTABLE SUPPORT ON THE COAST DURING ALL THIS TIME, HIS ONLY HOPE MAY LIE AMONG FORMER PANCHITO SUPPORTERS DISGUSTED WITH RAUL CLEMENTE'S CANDIDACY.

10. THE STYLE OF THE CAMPAIGN SEEMS TO REFLECT THE ABOVE PERCEPTION OF THE CANDIDATES' RELATIVE POSITIONS. DURAN-BALLEN HAS GONE OUT OF HIS WAY TO BE CONCILIATORY

TO ALL, TRADING BLANDNESS FOR BARBS. WHILE THIS MAY BE A FUNCTION OF HIS PERSONALITY, IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT, FEELING CONFIDENT OF BEING IN THE RUN-OFF, HE CANNOT AFFORD TO ALIENATE ANY POTENTIAL SECOND ROUND ALLY. FOR HIS PART, HUERTA, WHO HAS GROUND TO MAKE UP AND IS ALSO LOOKING FOR SECOND ROUND SUPPORT, MUST SOUND CONFIDENTIAL

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AGGRESSIVE, WHILE GORING NO ONE'S OX. HE MUST ALSO TALK A LOT AND SOUND INSTANTLY PRESIDENTIAL BY DEMONSTRATING HIM FAMILIARITY WITH THE ISSUES. BOTH THE BORJA AND THE ROLDOS CAMPS, LESS CONFIDENT OF MAKING THE RUN-OFF, ARE FREER TO GAMBLE ON PERSONAL INVECTIVE AND EVEN STRONGARM TACTICS. NEVERTHELESS, ROLDOS, STILL CONSCIENTIOUSLY ATTEMPTING TO AVOID ALIENATING THE ANTI-BUCARAM MIDDLE-CLASSES, AND BORJA, WHO SUFFERED WHEN HE CHOSE TO BAIT DURAN-BALLEN ON A TELEVISION PROGRAM RECENTLY, ARE LEAVING THE ROUGH STUFF TO OTHERS.

11. COMMENT: WE SEE LITTLE LIKELIHOOD THAT CAMPAIGN EVENTS PRIOR TO THE ELECTION WILL DIMINISH THE PROBABILITY OF DURAN-BALLEN'S FIRST ROUND VICTORY. HOWEVER, THE NEXT SIX WEEKS COULD SEE CRITICAL DEVELOPMENTS ON OTHER FRONTS. IT IS THE CHALLENGE OF RODRIGO BORJA, NOW RUNNING STRONGLY IN QUITO, TO LIMIT THE POTENTIAL FOR INROADS BY RAUL CLEMENTE HUERTA AND TO EXPLOIT THE PANCHITO HUERTA PEOPLE. HUERTA, WHO IS SPENDING VAST AMOUNTS, MUST CONTINUE HIS HIGH VISIBILITY CAMPAIGN AND ACCELERATE THE PACE OF HIS LATEST IMPROVEMENT. ROLDOS WILL HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO MOVE FORWARD, PERHAPS BY INCREASING THE EXPOSURE OF ASSAD BUCARAM AND BY MODIFYING HIS UP TO NOW MODERATE AND CIVILIZED CAMPAIGN. MEANWHILE, THE SPECTRE OF LIBERAL VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE VIVANCO'S CONVICTION HANGS OVER THE COMPETITION, AND IF AND WHEN PUBLICIZED COULD HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE PRESENT EQUATION.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION CAMPAIGNS, ELECTION FORECASTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978QUITO03711
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780232-0551
Format: TEL
From: QUITO
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197806102/aaaadjuj.tel
Line Count: 265
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: bb1b777c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Reference: 78 QUITO A-26
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2143664
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE: AT THE QUARTER POLE
TAGS: PINT, EC
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/bb1b777c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014